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## Mobile App Developed For PTSD Therapy

**Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.**—The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have released PE (for prolonged exposure) Coach, a smartphone mobile application for use with post-traumatic stress disorder treatment. Both departments use prolonged exposure therapy as an effective treatment for PTSD. PE Coach is a free app for [Apple](#) and [Android](#) mobile devices.

Psychologists at the Defense Department's National Center for Telehealth and Technology, known as T2, and the VA National Center for PTSD, developed the mobile app to specifically help patients with their therapy.

"PE Coach is a helpful tool that assists our service members and veterans who are between visits and in treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder," said Dr. Jonathon Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "We have shared this app with our military health care providers as well, and hope that many individuals who are receiving PE therapy will find it useful."

Prolonged exposure therapy helps a patient process a trauma memory to reduce the distress and avoidance caused by the trauma. The patient revisits the memory with a therapist and as the memory is emotionally processed, anxiety decreases. The therapy also helps the patient confront avoided situations that trigger memories of the trauma.

"We worked with a broad and diverse group of psychologists in the DoD and VA who are treating PTSD patients with prolonged exposure therapy," said Dr. Greg Reger, clinical psychologist in T2's Innovative Technology Applications division. "We wanted to help our patients in the therapy and make it easier for providers to deliver this treatment. PE Coach does both."

Many psychologists providing prolonged exposure therapy acknowledge it could be more effective if patients could better adhere to their assignments between sessions.

The patient installs PE Coach on their smartphone and can record the therapy session for playback between the sessions. The app also provides an explanation of exposure therapy, assignments, explanations of PTSD and its symptoms, and a convenient way to write notes about typically avoided locations, situations and events for later discussions with their therapist.

Reger said that writing in a notebook in public places made many people feel uncomfortable. However, tapping a note on a smartphone is much easier to capture those in-the-moment feelings.

PE Coach will help users successfully adhere to PE treatment, which could improve the quality of the treatment. Reger said it was not designed to be used as a self-help tool and should not replace professional counseling.

The Defense Department and VA released a similar mobile application last year. The PTSD Coach application is a reference tool for education, tracking symptoms, self-assessments and connections to support individuals with PTSD.

PE Coach is available for both iOS and Android mobile devices. More information about the app is at [www.t2health.org/apps/pe-coach](http://www.t2health.org/apps/pe-coach).

The National Center for Telehealth and Technology, located at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., serves as the primary Department of Defense office for cutting-edge approaches in applying technology to psychological health. More information about T2 is available at [www.t2health.org](http://www.t2health.org).

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